

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 594

By Woodson

A RESOLUTION directing the Education Oversight Committee to hold hearings on legislatively required background checks and other conditions of employment in Tennessee public schools.

WHEREAS, each time a person is hired by a local education agency, two sets of fingerprints are taken and a background check is ordered at a cost of forty-eight dollars (\$48.00); and

WHEREAS, fingerprints are sent to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation with results often taking six weeks or longer to arrive; and

WHEREAS, if a person is hired by more than one school system or accepts a new position with another school system in the state, an additional background check is required; and

WHEREAS, the results from such background checks cannot legally be shared between school systems resulting in a forty-eight dollar (\$48.00) fee paid each time (either by the employee or the school system), additional staff time to process the fingerprints, and the possibility of a lengthy wait for the results; and

WHEREAS, an aspiring educator may be required to have three background checks within two years - one by the higher education institution to enter the teacher training program, one by the school system prior to student teaching, and another by the school system prior to employment; and

WHEREAS, the names of all potential school employees must be submitted to the Department of Children Services prior to employment by the school system to determine if such individuals have been found by the department to have committed child abuse pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 37, creating additional complexity in pre-employment procedures; and

WHEREAS, the numerous and often duplicative background checks required prior to employment in a Tennessee public school have created confusion and, in some cases, unnecessary delay in hiring and cost; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that the Education Oversight Committee is directed to hold hearings on the legislatively required background checks and other conditions of employment in Tennessee public schools. Such hearings shall seek input and testimony from the following groups: Tennessee School Boards Association; Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents; Tennessee Education Association; Tennessee Principals Association; Tennessee Department of Education; Tennessee State Board of Education; Tennessee Higher Education Commission; Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association; Tennessee Department of Children's Services; Tennessee Department of Homeland Security; and Tennessee Bureau of Investigation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee shall make a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Education Committees no later than December 31, 2008.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Co-Chairs of the Education Oversight Committee.